

C E N T R A L   I N T E L L I G E N C E   A G E N C Y

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19 May 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Political Consequences of an Indian Proposal for a  
World-Wide Moratorium on Nuclear Weapons Tests

NOTE

This memorandum does not attempt to estimate the effect of the proposed moratorium upon the US nuclear program or upon the relative military capabilities of the US and the USSR.

I. The Non-Communist World

1. The immediate reaction of the majority of the governments and peoples of the non-Communist world would be one of approval and support for any proposal for a world-wide moratorium on nuclear tests. If the US accepted such a proposal they would consider it a proof of good sense and restraint and a pointed reply to Communist charges that the US seeks to terrorize and dominate the world. The governments of our NATO allies would be inclined to favor the proposal, but would probably withhold official comment until the US had made its position clear. If

the US rejected the proposal, they would put pressure on the US to change its position, but probably would not openly oppose the US decision.

2. If the US accepted the proposal, the governments of our allies, and their military and scientific advisors, would almost certainly estimate that the US had carefully calculated the effect the moratorium would have upon the US nuclear program and upon the Western strategic position. Therefore, political leaders would probably conclude that the moratorium would impede the USSR at least as much as it would the US, and, in any case, they would probably estimate that the political advantages would outweigh any scientific and technical disadvantages.

3. As the first reaction wore off, doubts would begin to appear. Some scientists and leaders in allied countries would undoubtedly be disturbed about the effect the moratorium would have on US nuclear research and development, though other scientists would support the moratorium. A popular feeling would be likely to develop in the free world that the self-imposed ban on testing would lead to further limitation on nuclear weapons and the possible abandonment of any "edge" the non-Communist powers might now have in nuclear weapons development. Extreme anti-Communist groups would feel that the moratorium was a step toward

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a policy of "co-existence", a division of the world into spheres of influence, and an abandonment of their cause by the US.

4. As discussion developed about the proposals, there would almost certainly be a growing feeling throughout the non-Communist world that the moratorium would have little value unless it constituted the first step toward a world-wide agreement permanently restricting or prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons. Communist and fellow-travelling organizations in the Free World would claim that the American acceptance of the offer represented a victory for "popular resentment" against the American "war-mongers". These organizations would undoubtedly hail this "victory" as but a stepping-stone on the road to completely banning nuclear weapons. We estimate that the sense of incompleteness which second thoughts on moratorium would give to many in the Free World would contribute significantly to this new Communist effort. The hopes of avoiding nuclear war which American support of the offer would raise would be so substantial as to make it difficult for the US to refuse to go the next step and "Ban the Bomb" entirely without finding itself in a less favorable international political position than it did before the moratorium was offered.

5. Some of our allies, particularly the UK, might suggest that the moratorium apply only to tests of weapons over, say, 10 KT. In supporting or suggesting this proposal, they would

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probably reason that nuclear tests below that magnitude could not be detected with absolute certainty, and that a moratorium on tests below that magnitude would not be observed by the USSR but, if accepted, would have to be honored by the US and the UK. They would probably also reason that restricting weapons tests in this way would be more acceptable to the US, would allow Western tests of small-yield weapons, and would divert popular attention from the H-Bomb.

6. If either the US or the USSR should carry out nuclear tests during discussions of the Indian proposal for a moratorium, there would almost certainly be strong criticism and hostility of the country which staged such tests. Moreover, resumption of nuclear tests after expiration of the moratorium would almost certainly cause a wave of popular feeling against the state which first resumed its testing program.

7. The Indian government would probably consider that US acceptance of their proposal was an admission of the correctness of Indian criticism of the March tests. At the conference which almost certainly would be called to discuss the proposal, India would probably seek to expand the moratorium into an agreement banning the production and use of nuclear weapons. Such an Indian initiative would probably gain substantial support from many Free World governments. If the US rejected

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the Indian proposal, the Indian government would be even more determined to maintain its neutralist position.

## II. The Communist Reaction

8. The Communist leaders would probably greet the Indian proposal with applause, and would attempt to connect it with their "peace campaign", without officially committing themselves. If the US rejected the proposal, they would claim that this was a proof of US aggressive intentions. If the US accepted the proposal, they would make a careful study of the situation before making an official reply. In this study, we believe that they would consider the following factors.

9. US motives in supporting the proposal. Communist leaders would probably estimate, at least initially, that the following motives were all involved in the US decision:

(a) That the US hoped to obtain a positive political and propaganda advantage from supporting the proposal and at the same time to deflate the Communist "peace" campaign.

(b) That the US hoped that a moratorium would cripple or at least hamper Soviet weapons development, at a time when the US research and development program had reached established goals.

(c) That the US, alarmed by the storm of protests over the March nuclear weapons tests, disturbed about the growing strength of the campaign to prohibit the use of nuclear weapons, and distressed by the recent strains upon the alliance, had been forced to accept the proposal.

10. The Monitoring and Policing Problem. Though the Communists are probably well aware that the US has substantial capabilities for detecting Soviet nuclear tests, they may believe that strict enforcement of the moratorium would be impossible. They probably believe that US surveillance involves the use of information and techniques which the US would not wish to disclose, and that the evidence or proof of tests derived through these techniques might not be convincing to all Free World governments. Indeed, they might believe that a US effort to condemn the USSR for an alleged violation of the moratorium would offer the Communists opportunities to confuse and divide the non-Communist world.

11. Effects of a Moratorium on Communist and Western Military Capabilities. The USSR almost certainly estimates that it will need to stage a few weapons tests reasonably soon in order to incorporate recent research work into more advanced and efficient weapons. However, the Kremlin probably believes that, in general,

weapons tests are more important for the US nuclear program than they are for the Soviet program. It almost certainly believes that nuclear weapons, especially those for strategic use, play a more important role in Western military strategy than they do in Communist strategy. Therefore, provided the USSR had completed its next series of tests, it would probably estimate that a moratorium on weapons tests would not impair Soviet capabilities more than it would those of the US.

12. Political Effects of a Moratorium. The Communists would probably estimate that they could incorporate the proposal into their "peace" campaign and (with left-wing and neutralist support) could convert it into the standard Soviet proposal to ban the use of nuclear weapons. They would estimate that many peoples and some governments would support the extension of the proposal to one including such a ban. In their view, such a development would probably destroy the profit the US had gained from supporting the original Indian proposal.

13. Probable Communist Courses of Action.

a. In their propaganda, the Communists would probably declare that US acceptance of the proposal had been forced by the Communist "peace" campaign and that it should be regarded only as a step toward banning the use of nuclear weapons.

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b. We believe that the Kremlin would seek to delay discussion of the proposal until any tests which it may have scheduled had been completed. The Kremlin would then probably agree to discuss the proposal, either at an international conference or at a "Big Five" conference, but it would almost certainly suggest that the proposal be expanded into a larger program involving a ban upon the use of nuclear weapons. It would probably oppose any attempt to exclude tests of weapons under 10 KT, arguing that only a moratorium on all weapons tests would bring progress toward peace.

c. In the last analysis, we believe that the Kremlin would probably accept the moratorium, convinced that the US and the UK would be forced by world opinion, especially by opinion within the US and the UK, to honor the agreement. It would almost certainly observe the moratorium until such time as the Soviet research program had progressed to the point where new tests would be desirable - approximately one year. The Soviet decision then would depend upon the political situation throughout the world and upon the Soviet estimate of the advantages it would gain from violating or denouncing the moratorium. In any case, the Kremlin would continue research in and production of all types and sizes of weapons.

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### III. Reactions to a Conditional Moratorium.

14. If the US announced that it would accept the Indian proposal for a moratorium on condition that it be tied to US proposals for limitation and inspection of armaments, we believe that the USSR would reject the US conditions. Free World opinion would be divided. Our NATO allies and Yugoslavia would probably support the US position, with some reluctance, while neutralist countries and Japan would attack the US for its unwillingness to take a step which would relieve world tension. Other countries would be critical but would be unlikely to take positive action.

15. If the US should propose a moratorium with these conditions before the Indian government had made its proposal, we believe that the reactions mentioned above would be much less unfavorable to the US. The US action would take the edge off any subsequent Indian proposal and would make more difficult propaganda exploitation by Communist and neutralist leaders. The USSR would almost certainly reject a US proposed moratorium to which a plan for limitation and inspection of armaments was tied.

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